

AGRICULTURAL RISK PROTECTION ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, recently Congress passed the Agricultural Risk Protection Act. This legislation provides reform for the Federal Crop Insurance Program, economic assistance to farmers, and the establishment of new, innovative programs to assist the agricultural community. One of the innovative programs established in the bill is what I have termed the Agriculture Marketing Equity Capital Fund.

The Agriculture Marketing Equity Capital Fund will assist independent grain and livestock producers nationwide develop new value-added agricultural opportunities. Independent producers will use these funds to develop business plans, feasibility studies, and business ventures with packers and processors.

While I was able to garner the support of many of the nation's largest commodity organizations, I met fierce opposition from the American Meat Institute's Washington lobbyists. My floor statement during the debate over the crop insurance conference report was highly critical of their efforts. It is not my intent to attack the individual members of AMI, but I believe it is important that they understand my position.

AMI's Washington lobbyists misrepresented the provision. A story written within "Inside AMI" recently explained:

Senator Chuck Grassley pushed conferees to provide for a \$35 million Agriculture Marketing Equity Capital Fund. The proposal was yet another attempt to fund an NPPC proposal that seeks to secure government funding to establish a national pork cooperative and use government funds to buy, build or purchase equity in a pork slaughter and processing facility.

This a blatant misrepresentation of the facts. My provision never had anything to do with publicly financing the construction of a pork plant.

My staff did contact AMI's Washington lobbyists who explained the opposition was based on the possibility of government-funded competition and specifically that funds would be used to develop a plant. In good faith, my staff offered AMI's Washington lobbyists an opportunity to offer their input on the legislation.

I cannot guarantee that AMI's input would have been acceptable to me, but we will never know if a mutually beneficial position could have been established because my office never received a response. I have been a friend of the agriculture community for a very long time. I am disappointed and dismayed by the way this was handled by AMI's Washington representatives.

As I promised in my crop insurance floor statement, I am today asking unanimous consent to place a list of AMI's member companies in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Once again, I'm not saying that every processor or packer on this list knew what AMI's

Washington lobbyists were doing, but I hope to inform every member what happened and why independent producers won't have the funds to reach out to processors in joint ventures and receive working capital to help everyone survive and thrive. I am also enclosing the text of a letter I recently sent to AMI's members.

It is my hope that members of AMI see the value of my efforts and work with me in the future to improve the plight of the independent producer. Providing stability to family farmers through joint ventures with AMI's membership would only serve to benefit both parties in the long-run.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

JUNE 9, 2000.

DEAR AMI MEMBER: I am writing to express how disappointed I am with your Washington lobbyists and their efforts to misrepresent and thus undermine my attempts to help American farmers.

You may have read a recent "Inside AMI" story claiming that, "Senator Grassley pushed conferees to provide for a \$35 million Agriculture Marketing Equity Capital Fund. The proposal was yet another attempt to fund a National Pork Producers Council proposal that seeks to secure government funding to establish a national pork cooperative and use government funds to buy, build or purchase equity in a pork slaughter and processing facility."

This claim is a blatant misrepresentation of the facts. The truth is that the provision your lobbyists were attacking had nothing to do with publicly financing the construction of a pork plant. These funds are intended to be used by independent grain and livestock producers to develop business plans, feasibility studies, and business ventures with packers and processors. While some may believe the truth is no longer relevant in Washington, D.C., that attitude will be given no quarter in dealings with me.

My staff reached out to your's to make certain they understood the error in their representations of my proposal, as well as to request alternative suggestions. No response ever came. Unfortunately, many of my colleagues were misled by your staff, and my proposal was gutted.

I wanted you to hear directly from me because I have had a long and positive working relationship with many AMI members over the years and I hope that this can be the case in the future. I believe, however, that it would be appropriate to investigate for yourself the concerns I have raised about your Washington representatives.

Sincerely,

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY,
U.S. Senator.

P.S.: I have included a copy of my floor statement for your review.

AMERICAN MEAT INSTITUTE MEMBERS

Bar-S Foods Co.
Birchwood Foods—Division of
Kenosha Beef Int'l.
Burke Corporation
Coleman Natural Products, Inc.
DeAns Pork Products
Devault Foods
Diamond Stainless
Evans Food Products Company
Fresh Mark, Inc.
E.W. Knass & Sons, Inc.
F. Wardynski & Sons, Inc.
Farmlands Foods, Inc.
Foodbrands America, Inc.

Fred Usinger, Inc.
Julian Freirich Company
Greater Omaha Packing Co., Inc.
Harrington's in Vermont, Inc.
Hormel Foods Corporation
Huiskens Meats
Indiana Packers Corporation
Jac Pac Foods Ltd.
Johnsonville Foods
Kowalski Sausage Company, Inc.
Maverick Ranch Lite Beef, Inc.
MPCA, Inc.
Norbest, Inc.
Omaha Steaks, Inc.
Provimi Veal Corporation
Stevison Ham Company
Sun-Husker Foods, Inc.
Taylor Packing
Wegmans Food Markets, Inc.
Wright Brand Foods, Inc.
Certified Angus Beef Program
Foodcomm International
International Natural Sausage Casing Association
KoSa
Meat and Livestock Australia
New Zealand Meat Producers Board
Packaging Digest Magazine
The Schroeder Group
ABC Research Corporation
A.C. Legg Inc.
Advanced Instruments Inc.
AEW Thurne, Inc. Ltd.
Alfacel, Inc.
ALKAR
Amana Appliances
American Engineering Corporation
Aspen Systems
Bell-Mark Inc.
Bell Paper Box, Inc.
Bettcher Industries, Inc.
BioControl Systems, Inc.
Blentech Corporation
BOC Gases
Bolton & Menk, Inc.
Bridge Machine Co., Inc.
Bunzl Distribution USA
Carruthers Equipment Company
Carter & Burgess, Inc.
Cretel Food Equipment Inc.
Custom Metalcraft, Inc.
CVP Systems, Inc.
DAPEC, Inc./NUMAFA USA
Deltrak, Inc.
Dewied International, Inc.
The Dupps Company
Equipment Exchange Company of America
The Facility Group
The Ferrite Company
Flavex Protein Ingredients—Division of Arnhem, Inc.
FoodUSA.Com
Foss North America, Inc.
FPEC CORP of Arkansas
F.R. Drake
G.B.C-111 International, LTD.
General Machinery Corporation
GlobalFoodExchange.com
Grain Processing Corporation
Grote Company
The HACCP Consulting Group, L.L.C.
Handtmann, Inc.
Hansen-Rice, Inc.
Hantover, Inc.
Harpak, Inc.
The Haskell Co.
HDR Engineering, Inc.
Heat and Control, Inc.
Henningsen Cold Storage Company
Hollymatic Corporation
Hutchison-Hayes Separators, Inc.
Hyder North American, Inc.
Hydrite Chemical Company
IDEXX Laboratories, Inc.
International Casings Group, Inc.
J.M. Swank Company
Jem Analytical Laboratory Services
JetNet Corporation

Jif-Pak Manufacturing, Inc.
 Koch Supplies Inc.
 Le Fiell Company
 Linker Machines
 Loma International, Inc.
 Mahaffy & Harder Engineering Company
 Maja Equipment
 Marlen Research Corporation
 Mepaco/Apache Stainless Equipment Corp.
 Mettler Toledo
 Mince Master
 Nalco Chemical Co.
 Neogen Corporation
 New Science Management
 Norwood Marking Systems, Inc.
 NSF International
 NuTEC Manufacturing, Inc.
 Planet Products Corporation
 Prime Prodata, Inc.
 Prime Label Consultants, Inc.
 Remco Products Corporation
 Ross Industries, Inc.
 Rudolph Industries
 Russell Harrington Cutlery Co.
 Karl Schnell, Inc.
 Sensitech, Inc.
 S.F.B. Plastics, Inc.
 Silliker Laboratories Group
 Speco, Inc.
 The Stellar Group
 Strahman Valves, Inc.
 Tipper Tie, Inc.
 Treif USA, Inc.
 Triton Commercial Systems
 Unitherm Food Systems
 Vande Berg Scales
 CV999 Packaging Systems
 Waterlink/Hycor
 Whizard Protective Wear Corporation
 York Saw & Knife
 Zer-O-Loc Insulated Panel & Door Systems

VICTIMS OF GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it has been more than a year since the Columbine tragedy, but still this Republican Congress refuses to act on sensible gun legislation.

Since Columbine, thousands of Americans have been killed by gunfire. Until we act, Democrats in the Senate will read some of the names of those who lost their lives to gun violence in the past year, and we will continue to do so every day that the Senate is session.

In the name of those who died, we will continue this fight. Following are the names of some of the people who were killed by gunfire one year ago today, on June 14, 1999:

Juan Avina, 21, San Antonio, TX.
 Theodoro Espada, 33, Dallas, TX.
 Samuel Foster, 30, Chicago, IL.
 Jonathan Hayes, 28, New Orleans, LA.
 Johnny Jackson, 21, Detroit, MI.
 Jamie Jones, 21, Miami-Dade County, FL.
 Frank Ivery Odom, 23, Washington, DC.
 Antonio Rodriguez, 20, Kansas City, MO.
 Carlos Santiago, 23, Chicago, IL.
 Eric T. Smith, 24, Chicago, IL.
 Michael Theard, 35, New Orleans, LA.
 Lakecia Wesley, 20, Washington, DC.
 Unidentified male, 53, Charlotte, NC.
 Unidentified male, Newark, NJ.

S. RES. 319

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I rise in support of S. Res. 319, which the Senate approved on Friday, during National Homeownership Week. I thank my colleagues for supporting this im-

portant resolution which affects the security and welfare of Missourians and all Americans. This resolution addresses the importance of placing quality housing within reach of a greater number of Americans as well as improving housing opportunities for Americans at all income levels. I, along with my colleagues, support the efforts of Habitat for Humanity and "The House the Senate Built" project.

As you know, the largest debt most families take on in their lifetimes is a home. Over 65 percent of Americans own a home, as do approximately 80 percent of Americans over the age of 50. This represents real progress. In 1940, fully 56 percent of Americans were renters. Clearly, America has come a long way. People buy homes for different reasons. A home can be a place of safety to raise a family, the potential of financial security, a sense of community. All around Missouri, and across this great nation, couples of all ages agree that buying a home is among the essential steps a family takes to ensure stability and prosperity in their lives.

While homes are a worthwhile investment, they also are expensive. Real estate experts recommend that families buy homes valued at over three times their annual income—a sum far greater than what families could pay back in a year, or two, or even five. So, most Americans take out a mortgage. Once this burden of debt is behind them, they are free to dream new dreams—pay for their children's or grandchildren's education, travel, or make other investments.

Homeownership is an important factor in promoting economic security and stability for American families. The level of homeownership among foreign-born naturalized citizens who have been in the United States for at least six years is the same as the level of homeownership of the Nation as a whole. When families such as these, who are new to our shores, prosper, we as a nation prosper.

This resolution expresses the Senate's concern for improving homeownership in America. The resolution commends the nonprofit housing organization, Habitat for Humanity, and supports their commitment to partner with the United States Senate to strengthen neighborhoods and communities by building simple and affordable homes with low-income buyers. I thank Senator BROWBACK for offering this resolution and endorse its passage.

ESTATE TAX RELIEF

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for S. 1128, the Estate Tax Elimination Act.

Mr. President, I came to understand the impact of the federal estate tax during my first campaign for election to the U.S. Senate. As I met with hundreds of small businessmen and women, timber lot owners, and farmers and

ranchers, I consistently heard the federal estate tax was a major road-block to the long-term success of their family operations.

But when I came to the Senate in 1993, it appeared it would be a long time before Congress could take action on the estate tax, or any other tax issue for that matter. We faced deficits as far as the eye could see. We had to make hard choices about spending cuts and tax relief for the neediest families. I'm pleased that my colleagues and I on the Democratic side made those tough choices in 1993 and in subsequent years. Combined with a strong economy, those tough choices gave us the opportunity to be in the position we are in today.

The effort to roll back the federal estate tax, and provide relief for farms and small businesses, started slowly. In 1995, I joined those efforts by introducing S. 161, the American Family Business Preservation Act. Senator Bob Dole was the prime Republican cosponsor of this measure. With respect to the estate tax, the Murray-Dole bill would have reduced the maximum estate tax rate from 55 percent to 15 percent if the heirs continued to own and operate a business for ten years after the death of the primary owner. Given the limited resources we had, I believed this modest bill was a good step forward.

In 1997, Congress passed the Taxpayer Relief Act, a bipartisan effort to reduce taxes for working Americans. The bill provided for an increase in the estate tax exemption over ten years, and created an additional exemption for small business and farm assets. I supported this bipartisan initiative to provide estate tax relief to my constituents. As it is phased in, this law will help to ensure the very small percentage of estates subject to the estate tax bill grow even smaller.

But we should all recognize the environment has changed. As projected surpluses have grown, the debate about the estate tax has turned from increasing the exemption to outright repeal. Estate tax opponents have made their case for elimination, and it's compelling. The question for me is no longer whether the estate tax will or should be repealed, but how and when it will be repealed. I believe one of the appropriate roles for Democrats in this debate—the same Democrats who helped balance the budget—is to ensure that we promote as progressive an end to the estate tax as possible.

At this moment in time, I believe S. 1128 is the most progressive estate tax repeal vehicle that is under consideration. Instead of taxing an estate when it is transferred to the next generation, it would require heirs to pay a capital gains tax on appreciated value when the asset is sold. This provides an effective mechanism for transferring farm and business assets, while still maintaining a reasonably progressive tax structure.